N E W S - L E T T E R

of the

CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE AND PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION

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Man has been called 'das kranke Tier' because of the burden of strain and explicit difficulties laid upon him by his position between nature and spirit, between angel and brute. What wonder, then, that by the approach through abnormality we have succeeded in penetrating most deeply into the darkness of human nature? . . . The literary artist should be the last person to be surprised at that.

Thomas Mann -- Freud and the Future

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The Shape of Things to Come

The response to the prospectus for the foundation and continuance of the Conference and its News-Letter has been more than satisfactory. The listing of subscribers-and-members indicates that teacher-scholars from all sections of the country are interested in keeping alive between meetings of MLA the work of exploring relationships that exist between general literature and psychology. We look forward to a growing subscription list, and, in the light of this optimism, we announce that six issues of this News-Letter will be sent to each paid-up subscriber ($1.00).

Our first task is the pleasant one of compiling a bibliography, particularly stressing recent contributions in our special field. We shall avoid any temptation to be stuffy, and what we lack in completeness we shall endeavor to make up by informality and usefulness in presentation. In our later issues--particularly those directly preceding the next meeting in Detroit--we shall indicate the material upon which our discussion at that time will be based, giving members an opportunity to consider in advance what might otherwise be too immediate to provoke intelligent, lively discussion. We shall try at all times to present controversial, provocative issues.

E.L.N.
L.F.M.

Bibliography (I)

A most interesting recent book, one which explores some aspects of our field which are sure to arouse controversy, is

Stanley Edgar Hyman - The Armed Vision (New York, 1948).

The chapter on psychoanalysis and criticism surveys the movement beginning with Freud and names articles outstanding for method and point of view. The author makes the much-needed distinction between analyzing the writer through his work and analyzing the work considered, so far as that is possible, apart from the writer. The validity of both viewpoints is recognized and distinguished. The author refers to

Saul Rosenzweig - "The Ghost of Henry James," which first appeared in Character and Personality for December, 1943 and was reprinted in Partisan Review for Fall, 1944.

Rosenzweig was a member of the Harvard group headed by Dr. Henry A. Murray, psychiatrist, a group which produced a series of studies in personality. He analyzes recurrent themes and characters and situations in the works of one author, using techniques devised by Murray's group, techniques which are embodied in the invaluable Thematic Apperception Tests (TAT).

The most recent synthesis of our particular version of "hyacinths and biscuits" is

F. L. Lucas - Literature and Psychology (London, 1951)

which was reviewed in the London Times Literary Supplement for February 15,1951.

Not all of the works which are of interest to us are based upon specific use of the doctrines of the various schools of depth psychology. No one, for example, would forego the different but closely related techniques in such works as

John Livingston Lowe's The Road to Xanadu (New York, 1927)

and

Karl Jaspers' Strindberg und Van Gogh (Berlin, 1926).

The latter work, by an outstanding German philosopher, contains also detailed analyses of the work of Hölderlin and Swedenborg, analyses which are clinically sound although not psychoanalytic.

Little known and appreciated is the monumental four-volume study of various writers by the late Stefan Zweig:

Die Baumeister der Welt, Versuch einer Typologie des Geistes.

Volume 1, Drei Meister; Balzac, Dickens, Dostoieffski (1919), was translated and published in English in 1930. The series title is rendered as Master Builders.

Volume 2, Der Kampf mit dem Dämon; Hölderlin, Kleist, Nietzsche(1925), has not, so far as we know, been translated into English.

Volume 3, Drei Dichter ihres Lebens; Casanova, Stendhal, Tolstoi(1928), was translated into English during the same year under the title Adepts in Self-Portraiture.

Volume 4, Die Heilung durch den Geist; Mesmer, Mary Baker Eddy, Freud (1931), published in English in 1932 as Mental Healers, is probably the best in the series.

The writings of Thomas Mann are so replete, implicitly and explicitly, with what he calls "the analytic revelation" that it is difficult to single out individual works for citation. The best choices would probably be the two essays on Freud:

Freud's Position in the History of Modern Thought, originally contained in Die Förderung des Tages (1930), translated in Past Masters (New York, 1933)

and

Freud und die Zukunft (Vienna, 1936), translated in Freud, Goethe, Wagner (New York, 1937) and Essays of Three Decades (New York, 1947).

See also

Harry Slochower - Thomas Mann's Joseph Story: An Interpretation (New York, 1938).

As an outstanding example of analysis which follows the pattern of Jung rather than Freud we should note

Maud Bodkin - Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination (New York, 1934).

An interesting Freudian study of the women in the texts of Wagner's music dramas was presented as a doctoral dissertation in German at Columbia University:

Louise Brink - The Women Characters in Richard Wagner (New York, 1924)

The work of psychiatrists as literary editors and critics would be well represented by the following:

Henry A. Murray's edition of Melville's Pierre (New York, 1948), which contains extensive comment on the text;

Clarence P. Oberndorf - The Psychiatric Novels of Oliver Wendell Holmes (New York, 1943);

Lawrence S. Kubie - "The Literature of Horror," two articles in The Saturday Review of Literature in 1934, one on Faulkner (an analysis of Sanctuary) and one on Erskine Caldwell (God's Little Acre);

Hanns Sachs - The Creative Unconscious: Studies in the Psychoanalysis of Art (Cambridge, Mass., 1942).

This last-named book was brilliantly reviewed by the psychologist

Jool Shor in Psychological Bulletin (1944).

Indispensable works which treat of the influence of the newer psychological concepts on creative writing are:

Mario Praz - La Carne, la Morte e il Diavolo nella Letteratura Romantica (Milano, 1930), translated as The Romantic Agony (London, 1933);

Lionel Trilling - "Freud and Literature," an essay now published in revised form in The Liberal Imagination (New York, 1950), first published in the spring, 1940, issue of The Kenyon Review and later, revised, in Horizon, September, 1947. Also in The Liberal Imagination is reprinted "Art and Neurosis," 1st published in Partisan Review, winter, 1945.

Frederick J. Hoffman - Freudianism and the Literary Mind (Baton Rouge, La., 1945). This book was reviewed in an excellent article by

Ernst Kris - Psychoanalytic Quarterly for April, 1946.

An interesting comparison of two studies of a single author, made at different times and places and from similar viewpoints, but with rather different conclusions, can be made between

Joseph Wood Krutch - Edgar Allen Poe (New York, 1926).

and

Marie Bonaparte - Edgar Poe (Paris, 1933). So far as we know, this has not been translated.

Another work which deals with a single author (Verhaeren), despite its rather grandiose title, is

Charles Baudoin - Psychoanalysis and Aesthetics (London, 1924).

Baudoin is a Swiss psychologist and a poet in his own right, follower of certain of the analytic schools and of Ribot and Ceuó as well.

Professor Harry Slochower has included in his approach to literary criticism during the last few years the perspective of depth psychology along with the socio-historical approach:

Harry Slochower - Franz Kafka: Pro-Fascist Exile. A Miscellany (New York, 1946).

An even more difficult driving in double harness is the very recent work which attempts analysis of an author along both Freudian and Marxist lines:

Jack Lindsay - Charles Dickens (London, 1949).

The problem is more fully discussed in the chapter on "Clash and Congruence between Marx and Freud," in

Harry Slochower - No Voice Is Wholly Lost (New York, 1945).

To conclude this first issue of our informal bibliography, let us list (without comment) some works in the field written by our own members:

Edmund Bergler - The Writer and Psychoanalysis (New York, 1950)

Roy P. Basler - Sex, Symbolism and Psychology in Literature (Rutgers N.J., 1948). A study of poems by Coleridge, Poe, Tennyson, and T.S.Eliot.

Leonard F. Manheim - The Dickens Pattern: A Study in Psychoanalytic Criticism (unpublished doctoral dissertation at Columbia, 1948; available through University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1950)

Eleanor L. Nicholes - The Shadowed Mind: The Influence of the Schizophrenic Process on the Poetry of John Clare (unpublished doctoral dissertation at New York University, 1950)

Arthur Wormhoudt - The Demon Lover (New York, 1949). A psychoanalytical study of some of the major poems of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and Byron.

Our next issue will contain a listing of some "works in progress," some of the leading articles on our subject in recent periodicals, and such other contributions as members may from time to time send in. Bibliographical items should be sent to Dr. Manheim, preferably accompanied by a brief critical or descriptive note.

Correspondence

From Roy P. Basler (February, 1951):

We certainly do not wish to exclude [from the Bibliography in the News-Letter] works by psychoanalysts and practicing psychiatrists. . . I believe it will be well to enter a correction in the next issue to the effect that we hope to include studies on the basis of their contribution to the understanding of literature and literary artists, regardless of whether written by scholars, critics or psychiatrists. [Correction made and embodied in the first installment of the Bibliography above.---Ed.]

From Jack Lindsay (London, January 1):

I myself think the psychoanalytic method can clear up a lot in literary matters as long as the personal or family-pattern is always seen as part of a larger whole which includes the structures of surrounding history. I have had much criticism from fellow-marxists for this, but will persist.

From Else M. Fleissner (January, 1951):

I doubt that you will find many colleges where courses dealing with our subject are offered. There may be an occasional course in psychology where reference to literature is made, but the literature departments--though the subject may be discussed in several courses among other topics--will hardly emphasize it in their catalogue descriptions. [More on this in our next issue.--Ed.]

From William J. Ford, M.D. (December, 1950):

I am continually surprised that prejudice against psychoanalysis appears; very surprised that it was present in literary men at all (except for those whose literary criticism is designed to prove this is the best of all possible worlds or that certain religious beliefs must constitute literary standards). . . . [Y]ou can go all out for psychoanalytic explanations. . . ; you can ignore it altogether or you can see, feel and say that psychoanalytic psychology comes closer than anything else to getting at the "true" estimation of human nature.

From Charles I. Glicksberg (December, 1950):

Such a group [as the Conference on Literature and Psychology] certainly has a valuable function to perform and deserves to be supported whole-heartedly. If it is organized democratically, as I am sure it will be, without doctrinal commitments or ideological orthodoxies that each member must subscribe to in advance, then it should be established along permanent lines. God knows, there are enough important problems to thrash out to keep us busy until the next generation of scholars and critics are ready to take over. . . . Heretics, dissidents, and even downright disbelievers in the psychoanalytic method should be allowed to join, if they so desire.

From Frederick J. Hoffman (December, 1950):

I am very much in favor of giving greater recognition to psychoanalysis and literary criticism--if necessary, of setting up another MLA permanent section. I should, however, first inquire whether the problem could not be solved within the organization as presently constituted: there are a number of sections which might from time to time make a special point of presenting programs on the subject. I bring the matter up only because I think MLA is already more than sufficiently complicated, beyond the point of any man's being able to do justice to more than a fourth of its offerings and activities.

[Quotations from the important letters of Dr. Hayakawa and Dr. Boothe of the Menninger Clinic, which were read at the December meeting, will be included in future issues if members indicate their desire therefor.]

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